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ABSTRACT

The interdependence of home and work lives is especially salient among women workers as a result of their greater family responsibilities. To examine the relationship between occupational status, marital status, and number of children among working women, a telephone survey of 1,232 Los Angeles adults (827 females, 405 males) was conducted. An analysis of the results showed that the largest proportion of women workers were married (49.9%), were in the 26- 35-year-old age group (29.4%), and had no children (61.7%). The majority of women in professional and managerial jobs were married or cohabiting. However, a larger than expected proportion of women with managerial jobs were widowed, divorced, or separated. A greater proportion of professional and managerial workers compared to semi-skilled. unskilled, and service workers were childless. The percentage of women workers without spouses who were parents was similar to the percentage of married women who had children. (BL)

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# Relationship of Occupational Status and Familial Circumstances for Working Women

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Relationship of Occupational
Status and Familial Circumstances
for Working Women

Work and family provide the greatest contributions to overall satisfaction with life (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Glen & Weaver, 1979). While each of these two important spheres of life has received a substantial amount of attention independent of the other, a large body of evidence has accumulated indicating the interdependence of the two (Gutek, Nakamura, & Nieva, 1981; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980; Rice, Near, & Hunt, 1979).

This interdependence of home life and work life is experienced by both men and women, but it is especially salient among women workers as a result of their greater family responsibilities (Pleck et al., 1980). Women have traditionally had the primary responsibility for housekeeping and child care. Research indicates that household responsibilities do not diminish for those women employed outside the home (Nieva & Gutek, 1981).

Responsibilities at work combined with those at home create a potential for role overload and/or role conflict for women workers. Hall (1975) suggested that the more roles a woman has, such as wife, mother, employee, the greater the possibility that exists for role overload. Role conflict arises from competing pressures from the various roles.

While working women have typically been treated as a homogeneous group (Andrisiani (1978); Pleck et al., 1980), a need to examine specific combinations of work and family life

has been proposed (Appelbaum, 1981; Gutek et al., 1981).

The work of Beckman (1979) lends support for the usefulness of this type of inquiry. Beckman concluded that professional and nonprofessional women differ in their perception of interference from children on work; professional women regarded the parenthood role as more incompatible with the employment role than did nonprofessional women.

The present study examined the relationship between occupational status and such familial circumstances as marital status and number of children for working women. It was hypothesized that women in different occupational categories would differ in familial circumstances. Specifically, it was predicted that women in professional or managerial level jobs might avoid possible role conflict and/or overload by remaining unmarried, or if married, be childless or have few children.

## Method

### Subjects

The data used were gathered in a representative telephone survey of working adults in Los Angeles county. There were 827 women and 405 men, for a total of 1232 respondents in the final sample with women oversampled (see Gutek, 1981. for a description of the sampling strategy and the instrument).

### Data Analysis

Log linear analysis was used to determine the significant

interactions of the variables occupation, marital status, number of children and age of respondent.

## Results

It was found that the largest proportion of women workers were married (49.9%), in the 26-35 year old age group (29.4%), although the mean age was 41.8 years, and have no children (61.7%). (See Figures 1-3).

The results of the log linear analysis indicated that five two way interactions emerged as significant when the contributions of all the main effects and other two way interactions were considered. Three way interactions did not make a significant contribution beyond the two way interactions. The best model, then, included the two way interactions of occupation and marital status, occupation and age, marital status and number of children, marital status and age, and number of children and age. (See Tables 1-3). In additional analyses with fewer levels of the variables, occupation and number of children also was significant (See Table 4).

## Discussion

Contrary to prediction it was found that a majority of women in professional and managerial jobs were married or cohabiting. However, a larger than expected proportion of women with managerial jobs were widowed, divorced or separated. This is especially noteworthy considering the fact that a larger proportion of

managerial workers are in the 36-45 year old age category than in the other occupational categories (32% compared with 22.3%, 20% and 25%), and that this age group has the highest proportion of married women of any of the age groups (65.2% compared with 36.4%, 52.5% and 59.2%). This finding might lend support to a role conflict or overload explanation in that for those with career ambitions typical of managers, conflicting demands from home and work might contribute to dissolution of marriages.

The interaction of number of children and occupational status provides partial support for the hypothesis. A greater proportion of professional and managerial workers are childless than semi, unskilled and service workers. However, clerical and skilled workers, although similar to service workers in terms of both age and marital status composition, were more similar to professional and managerial workers with respect to number of children.

The finding that the percentage of women workers without spouses who are parents (41.5%) is similar to the percentage of married women who have children (47%) is of especial importance in that there is a greater propensity for conflicts between work and home life in these families in which one parent has the full load of job and family responsibilities.

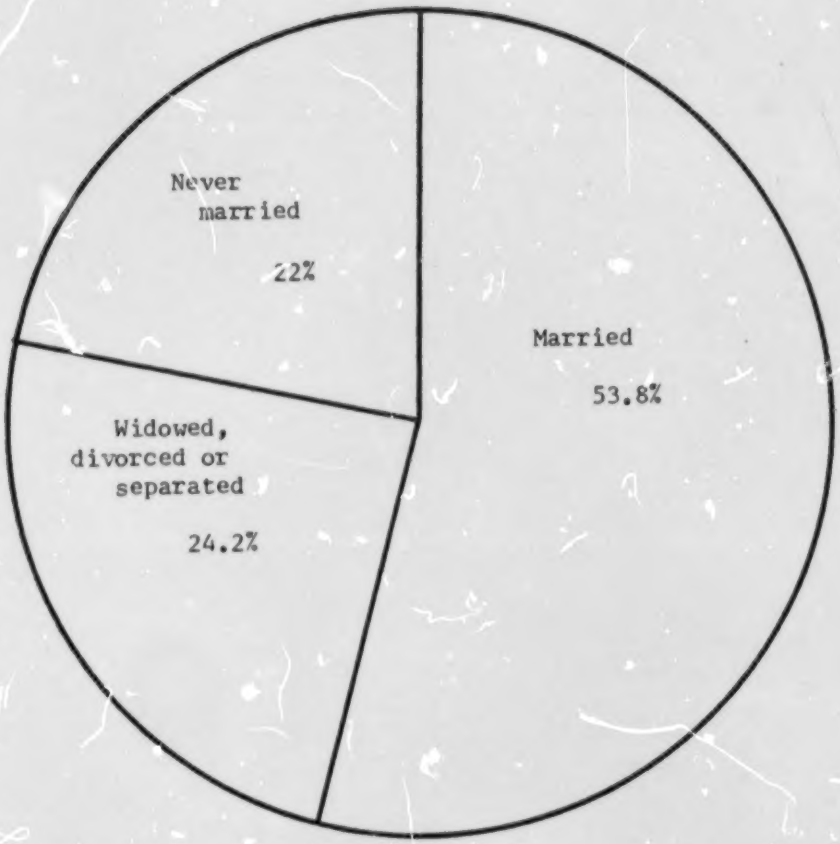


Figure 1 Percentage of women workers in each marital status category.

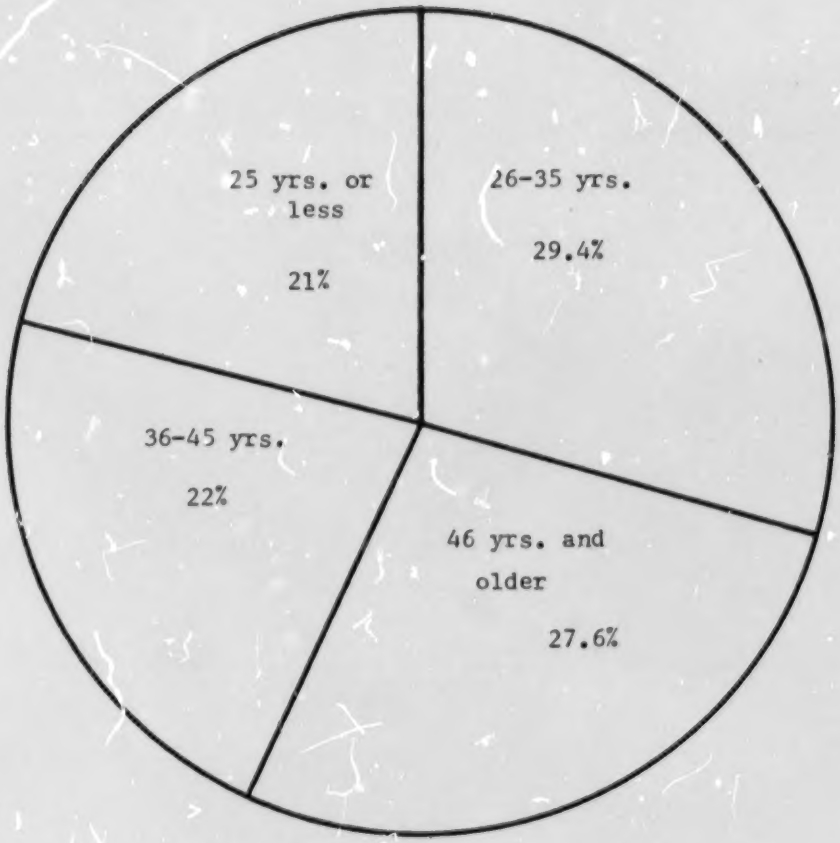


Figure 2 Percentage of women workers categorized by age.

Figure 3 Percentage of women workers categorized by number of children

Table 1

Relationship of Marital Status and Occupation for Women

| | Married or Cohabiting | Widowed Divorced Separated | Never Married | Total | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional | 61 | 20 | 19 | 100% | 205 |
| Managerial | 53.8 | 36.9 | 9.2 | 100% | 65 |
| Clerical and Skilled | 48.6 | 25.3 | 26.1 | 100% | 403 |
| Semi and Unskilled | 70 | 18.3 | 11.7 | 100% | 60 |
| Service | 50 | 23.3 | 26.7 | 100% | 86 |

$\chi^2_{(8, N=819)} = 26.5,\ p < .001$

Table 2

Relationship of Marital Status and Age for Working Women

| | Married or Cohabiting | Widowed Divorced Separated | Never Married | Total | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 yrs. or less | 36.4 | 4 | 59.5 | 100% | 173 |
| 26-35 yrs. | 52.5 | 23.8 | 23.8 | 100% | 240 |
| 36-45 yrs. | 65.2 | 26.5 | 8.3 | 100% | 181 |
| 46 yrs. and older | 59.2 | 38.6 | 2.2 | 100% | 228 |

$\chi^2(6, N = 822) = 232.2, p < .00001$

Table 3

Relationship of Age and Occupation for Women

| | 25 yrs. or less | 26-35 yrs. | 36-45 yrs. | 46 yrs. and older | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional | 11.2 | 37.9 | 22.3 | 28.6 | 206 |
| Managerial | 13.8 | 23.1 | 32.3 | 30.8 | 65 |
| Clerical and Skilled | 26.1 | 26.6 | 20.3 | 27 | 403 |
| Semi and Unskilled | 16.7 | 30 | 25 | 28.3 | 60 |
| Service | 28.7 | 26.4 | 19.5 | 25.3 | 87 |

$\chi^2(12, N = 821) = 31, p < .01$

Table 4

Relationship of Occupation and Number of Children for Working Women

| | No Children | 1 or 2 Children | 3 or more Children | Total | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional | 65 | 27.2 | 7.8 | 100% | 106 |
| Managerial | 63.1 | 30.8 | 6.2 | 100% | 65 |
| Clerical and Skilled | 63.8 | 29.8 | 6.5 | 100% | 403 |
| Semi and Unskilled | 45 | 45 | 10 | 100% | 60 |
| Service | 54.7 | 30.2 | 15.1 | 100% | 86 |

$\chi^2 (8, N = 820) = 16.4 , p < .04$

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